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SUBJECT: Santiago Dec. 12-14 Media Report

Lead Story

¶1. Results of Sunday's presidential election: Right-wing Sebastian Pinera 44.03%; center-left ruling coalition candidate Eduardo Frei 29.62%; independent Marco Enriquez-Ominami 20.12%, and Socialist Party candidate Jorge Arrate 6.21%. This means that Pinera and Frei will go to a runoff on January 17. In the congressional election, the ruling coalition lost its majority in the Chamber of Deputies, but recovered it in the Senate (All dailies, 12/14).

Presidential Election

¶2. Pinera's team believes that one third of those who voted for Enriquez-Ominami in the first round will vote for its candidate in the runoff (Conservative, influential El Mercurio, 12/14).

¶3. Since the onset of democracy in 1989, no other independent candidate had received more votes than Enriquez-Ominami on Sunday. However, none of the candidates that he supported for Congress won. In his concession speech yesterday, Enriquez-Ominami said both Frei and Pinera represent leaders of "the past" and not the future. "Neither is the expression of a better country," he said. Socialist Jorge Arrate received more votes than any other left-wing coalition candidate since the return of democracy (El Mercurio).

¶4. Pinera's runoff campaign will focus on change, youth, and the middle class. Frei, on the other hand, will try to "polarize" the election as much as possible to relive the antagonism and results of the 1988 "Yes/No" plebiscite (Conservative, independent La Tercera, 12/14).

¶5. 43.9% of men voted for Pinera; 30.45 for Frei; 18.7% for Enriquez-Ominami, and 6.8% for Arrate; 44.1% of women voted for Pinera, 28.8% for Frei, 21.3% for Enriquez-Ominami, and 5.6% for Arrate. The abstention rate was 13.88% (La Tercera, 12/14).

¶6. The results of the presidential and parliamentary election are a big blow for the ruling coalition. Pinera not only received a percentage that is considered very hard to surpass, his coalition also won the highest number of seats in Congress, and a large number of women -- presumably Bachelet's "captive" voters -- voted for him (La Tercera, 12/14).

¶7. With Enriquez-Ominami out of the election, Pinera can now recover his place as the candidate who represents change. Frei, on the other hand, is facing his worst scenario and will try to conquer those who voted for Enriquez-Ominami. He will do this by confronting Pinera on the relationship between business and politics, human rights issues, and by warning about social problems with an eventual right-wing government (La Tercera, 12/14).

Parliamentary Election

¶8. The ruling coalition lost its majority in the Chamber of Deputies (57 versus 58 seats) and right-wing UDI party has now the largest representation in the Chamber (23.1%). The Socialist Party lost several seats (La Tercera, 12/14).

¶9. The ruling coalition recovered the majority in the Senate with 19 senators. The opposition alliance has 17 seats (El Mercurio, 12/14).

¶10. An agreement with the ruling coalition allowed the Communist Party to elect three representatives to the Chamber of Deputies. This is the first time the CP has representation in Congress since the onset of democracy in 1990 (La Tercera, 12/14).

¶11. The Christian Democratic has now majority representation in Congress: 19 deputies and 9 senators. The number of women in the Senate increased from two to six, the largest number since 1990. Of the 18 elected senators, 12 are newcomers. This means that 2/3 thirds of senators in office for the next eight years are new (El Mercurio, 12/14).

Commentaries

¶12. "The question has been answered. Frei and Pinera will face each other in a runoff. But although Pinera has a comfortable advantage, he did not reach the tipping point that would have left him with the victory in his pocket" (Eugenio Tironi, El Mercurio, 12/14).

¶13. "If the (ruling) Concertacion coalition wants to stay in power... it must start to look for Enriquez-Ominami's support and of those political leaders who support him.... This election clearly shows that the Concertacion is still a strong political force and that the right, in spite of having a moderate and modern candidate, does not have the ability to attract a majority" (Political commentator Patricio Navia, La Tercera, 12/14).

¶14. "The Concertacion had never before faced such a radical and inextricable threat such as the percentage obtained by Pinera (Ascanio Cavallo, La Tercera, 12/14).

¶15. Editorial "The message of the presidential and congressional election is that Chileans want change, where the renewal of leaders is a priority.... There is much at stake here. On the one hand

there is the possibility that the ruling coalition might stay in power after two decades in office. The other is that a center-right coalition will occupy La Moneda for the first time in 50 years. It is important that both sides defend their positions using good tools, but it is also important that they put the interest of the country above everything else" (La Tercera, 12/14).

U.S. - Latin America

¶16. Headline:" Secretary Hillary Clinton calls on Venezuela and Nicaragua to stay on democratic path." The Secretary warned countries in the hemisphere to "think twice" before approaching Iran. The secretary defended the U.S. reaction to the coup in Honduras stating that her country had used a "pragmatic and multilateral approach of principles," to restore democracy in that country. She urged Latin American countries to stay on the democratic path and expressed the U.S. concern with legitimately elected leaders who after elected undermine democratic order and people's rights (El Mercurio, 12/12).
SIMONS